

Consumer  
Survey Report  
2008

Department of Health and Social Services  
Office of Children's Services

## **Introduction**

The Department of Health and Social Services, Office of Children's Services supports the well-being of Alaska's children. The agency assesses allegations of maltreatment and coordinates services that promote child safety when there are concerns of neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional injury to children in their homes. The agency works with the family to maintain children in their own homes by providing services. When children cannot safely remain in their own homes, the agency seeks relative placement whenever possible. Parents are encouraged to work with the agency in achieving their case goals in a timely manner. When children are unable to be reunited with their parents, the Office of Children's Services works toward a permanency goal such as guardianship, adoption, or other planned living arrangements.

The Evaluation Unit of the Office of Children's Services conducted a survey of parents throughout the state whose children have been in out-of-home care to ensure the delivery of quality services to children and families. The survey sought parents' opinions about the quality of services they had received and the assistance they received from their caseworker while their children were placed outside their home.

## **Survey Methods**

The survey was conducted by telephone. A survey instrument was developed to guide the conversation and record parents' responses. Parents were selected randomly from a list of families with open cases in which children had been placed in out-of-home care. Some of the parents who were contacted had children who were out-of-home at the time of the survey, while some parent's children had recently been reunified. Survey participants whose children were returned home were asked to respond to the survey questions regarding the experiences they had during the time their children were in out-of-home care.

To protect the family's privacy and confidentiality, messages were not left for parents. Up to four attempts were made to reach each parent. Participation in the survey was voluntary. There were 102 parents contacted who participated in the telephone survey. Parents were assured that the information gathered would only be used in combination with responses from other participants and that no individual would be identified.

### Survey Respondents

There were 102 parents who participated in the telephone survey. Table 1 presents the number of parents contacted from each region by their role who participated in the survey.

**Table 1**

Survey Respondents by Region, Number, and Percent						
Region	Mother	Percent	Father	Percent	Both	Percent
Northern	9	90%	1	10%	0	0%
Southcentral	17	81%	4	19%	0	0%
Anchorage	32	60%	21	40%	0	0%
Southeast	9	50%	8	44%	1	6%
Total	67	66%	34	33%	1	1%

### Findings

There were several areas of inquiry covered in the interview. The survey began with an introduction as to the purpose and use of the survey findings. Inquiry was made into the parents' demographics including location, the number of children in out-of-home care, and type of placement setting for the children. Inquiry was made into how many placements their child has experienced while in out-of-home care, whether they participated in their case plan, the frequency of contact they had with their caseworker, and their overall satisfaction with their experience in working with the Office of Children's Services. The findings are presented in the remainder of this report. Of note is that the percentages contained within each table were rounded to the nearest number so that totals will equal 100 percent for each row.

There was opportunity at the end of the conversation with parents allowing for any additional comments parents wished to make. The comments received by parents were analyzed and sorted for presentation purposes. The comments received from parents are presented in narrative form at the end of this report.

- **Which description best describes where you reside?**

Respondents were asked to choose from the following descriptions: remote community or village off the road system, rural or small town, and city or large metropolitan area. Fairbanks, Anchorage, and Juneau were considered to be city or metropolitan areas. Table 2 presents the areas where respondents resided.

**Table 2**

Survey Respondents' Geographic Residence by Region, Number, and Percent						
Region	Remote Community or Village	Percent	Rural Area or Small Town	Percent	City or Metro Area	Percent
Northern	2	20%	1	10%	7	70%
Southcentral	3	14%	9	43%	9	43%
Anchorage	0	0%	0	0%	53	100%
Southeast	2	11%	9	50%	7	39%
Total	7	7%	19	19%	76	74%

- **Are one or more of your children in out-of-home placement?**

In some cases one or more children will be in out-of-home placement, while other children can be maintained in the home. The children's placement status was determined by asking participants if they had one or more of their children in out-of-home placement. Table 3 presents the responses to the children's placement status.

**Table 3**

Children's Placement Status by Region, Number, and Percent						
Region	All Out- of-Home	Percent	All In- Home	Percent	Out-Of- Home and In-Home	Percent
Northern	7	70%	1	10%	2	20%
Southcentral	15	71%	2	10%	4	19%
Anchorage	39	74%	6	11%	8	15%
Southeast	11	61%	2	11%	5	28%
Total	72	71%	11	11%	19	18%

- **How long have your children been in out-of-home care?**

The agency works to reunite children as soon as safety in their homes can be assured. Respondents were asked the length of time their children had been in out-of-home care. Table 4 presents the responses.

**Table 4**

<b>Length of Time Child in Out-of-Home Care by Region, Number, and Percent</b>						
<b>Region</b>	<b>Less Than One Year</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>One-Two Years</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>More than Two Years</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Northern	7	70%	1	10%	2	20%
Southcentral	7	33%	8	38%	6	29%
Anchorage	28	53%	14	26%	11	21%
Southeast	7	39%	8	44%	3	17%
Total	49	48%	31	30%	22	22%

- **Where are the children placed?**

When children have to be placed outside of their home, the agency seeks relatives, foster homes, and other appropriate temporary placements. Relatives who are able to provide care for a child are asked to become involved. When relatives are not able to care for a child, the agency seeks a foster home in the child's community. Respondents were asked to indicate the location of their child's placement. Tables 5 and 6 present the responses for type of children's placement and the location of the placement.

**Table 5**

<b>Children's Type of Placement Setting by Region, Number, and Percent</b>						
<b>Region</b>	<b>Foster Care</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Relative Care</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Other Care</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Northern	4	40%	4	40%	2	20%
Southcentral	13	62%	4	19%	4	19%
Anchorage	30	57%	19	36%	4	7%
Southeast	14	78%	3	17%	1	5%
Total	61	60%	30	29%	11	11%

**Table 6**

Location of Children's Placement by Region, Number, and Percent						
Region	Parent's Community	Percent	Another Region in State	Percent	Another State	Percent
Northern	7	70%	3	30%	0	0%
Southcentral	12	57%	8	38%	1	5%
Anchorage	40	76%	6	11%	7	13%
Southeast	14	78%	3	17%	1	5%
Total	73	72%	20	19%	9	9%

- Were you asked about relatives that your children could be placed with?

The agency works with parents to identify relatives who are available to care for their child. When children can be placed immediately with relatives, it provides a familiar setting for the child when removal from their homes is necessary. The majority of parents indicated that they were asked about relative placements. Table 7 presents the responses of parents regarding involvement in the search for a relative placement.

**Table 7**

Parents Asked About Relative Placement by Region, Number, and Percent				
Region	Yes-Was Asked	Percent	No-Was Not Asked	Percent
Northern	9	90%	1	10%
Southcentral	21	100%	0	0%
Anchorage	45	85%	8	15%
Southeast	15	83%	3	17%
Total	90	88%	12	12%

- **Have your children been in more than one placement since they were removed from your home?**

When a child is placed in out-of-home care, the agency works to ensure that the child is appropriately matched to caregivers who have the capacity to meet the child's needs. The initial foster home is intended to be stable until the agency achieves the child's permanency goal. There are times when children will experience placement disruption. Table 8 presents the responses.

**Table 8**

<b>Children With Multiple Placements by Region, Number, and Percent</b>						
<b>Region</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Unsure</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Northern	8	80%	2	20%	0	0%
Southcentral	15	71%	6	29%	0	0%
Anchorage	34	64%	17	32%	2	4%
Southeast	11	61%	7	39%	0	0%
Total	68	67%	32	31%	2	2%

- **If your child had multiple placements, how many placements have they experienced since leaving your home?**

Stability of placement is important to enable a child to remain in the same familiar surroundings, continue in their same school, and after school programs. Respondents were asked how many placements their child experienced prior to returning to their care. Table 9 presents the responses.

**Table 9**

<b>Placements Child Experienced by Region, Number, and Percent</b>								
<b>Region</b>	<b>One</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Two</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Three to Five</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>More Than Six</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Northern	2	20%	6	60%	2	20%	0	0%
Southcentral	6	29%	11	52%	2	9%	2	10%
Anchorage	17	33%	17	33%	11	22%	6	12%
Southeast	7	39%	7	39%	2	11%	2	11%
Total	32	32%	41	41%	17	17%	10	10%

- **What type of visitation schedule do you have?**

The agency encourages and supports the parent/child relationship through scheduled visitation between the parents and their children. Some field offices have a visitation room and a person who supervises visitation. Visits may be supervised or unsupervised depending on the status of the family case. Table 10 presents the responses from parents for types of visitation schedules.

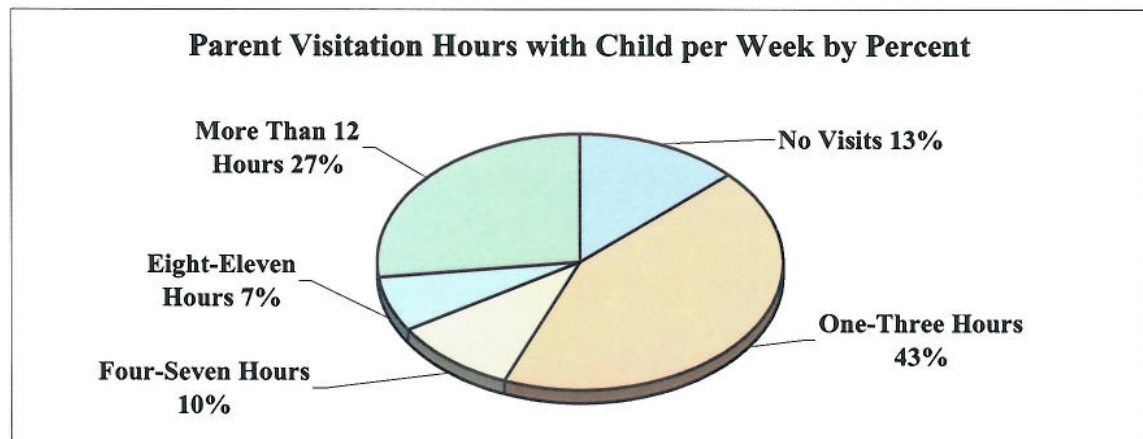
**Table 10**

Type of Visitation Schedule by Region and Number								
Region	Supervised		Not Supervised		Open Visitation		No Visitation Allowed	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Northern	2	20%	1	10%	5	50%	2	20%
Southcentral	9	43%	3	14%	5	24%	4	19%
Anchorage	27	51%	10	19%	11	21%	5	9%
Southeast	6	33%	5	28%	5	28%	2	11%
Total	44	43%	19	19%	26	25%	13	13%

- **How many hours of visitation do you have with your children per week?**

Schedules for visits are flexible to accommodate parents' work schedules and parents who are participating in case plan services. Figure 1 presents the parents' report on hours of visitation they have with their children each week.

**Figure 1**



n=102

- **Are you satisfied with the visitation schedule? If no, what changes would you like to see in the schedule?**

Respondents were asked to indicate their satisfaction with the visitation schedule and also to provide comments. Parents commented that they were not satisfied with their scheduled visits. They wanted and expected their visits to increase after discussing their concerns and progress in services with their worker. Parents stated that their visits are very important to them and to their children. Table 11 presents the responses to parents' satisfaction with the visitation schedule.

**Table 11**

<b>Parent Satisfaction With Visitation Schedule by Region, Number, and Percent</b>				
<b>Region</b>	<b>Yes-Satisfied</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>No-Not Satisfied</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Northern	7	78%	2	22%
Southcentral	8	38%	13	62%
Anchorage	25	47%	28	53%
Southeast	6	35%	11	65%
Total	46	46%	54	54%

- **Were your children able to remain in their same school?**

Maintaining children in the same school whenever possible is important to the Office of Children's Services. Some respondents remarked that their children were unable to stay in their same school due to being placed in an out-of-state treatment facility, a different community, or a different school district. Some of the survey participants did not have school-aged children and are thus not included in the total. Table 12 presents the responses.

**Table 12**

<b>Children Attended Same School While in Care by Region, Number, and Percent</b>				
<b>Region</b>	<b>Yes-Same School</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>No-Changed School</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Northern	6	67%	3	33%
Southcentral	8	44%	10	56%
Anchorage	26	65%	14	35%
Southeast	9	60%	6	40%
Total	49	60%	33	40%

- **Have children been able to maintain their community activities such as after school visiting with friends and other recreational activities?**

When children's daily routines are affected by out-of-home placement, the agency encourages the caregiver to help the child maintain established friendships, recreational activities, and participation in after school programs. Table 13 presents parent's responses to children continuing their community activities.

**Table 13**

<b>Children Maintained Community Activities While In Care by Region, Number, and Percent</b>				
<b>Region</b>	<b>Yes- Maintained</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>No-Did Not Maintain</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Northern	9	90%	1	10%
Southcentral	15	71%	6	29%
Anchorage	32	60%	21	40%
Southeast	11	61%	7	39%
Total	67	66%	35	34%

- **Have your child's heritage and cultural activities been supported and maintained while in placement?**

The Office of Children's Services encourages and supports foster parents in making sure children remain connected to their culture through participation in cultural events and activities. Respondents were asked to share their comments. Many parents expressed that they believed their children's culture was valued and supported. Table 14 presents the responses to the child's cultural and heritage being maintained.

**Table 14**

<b>Children's Heritage and Cultural Activities Supported While In Care by Region, Number, and Percent</b>				
<b>Region</b>	<b>Yes Supported</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>No-Not Supported</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Northern	8	80%	2	20%
Southcentral	17	81%	4	19%
Anchorage	38	72%	15	28%
Southeast	13	72%	5	28%
Total	76	75%	26	25%

- **Are you familiar with your case plan?**

The agency meets with parents to develop case goals and identify services that parents are able to participate in to address safety concerns. The case plan is used to assist parents in tracking their progress in receiving services and achieving case goals. Table 15 presents the responses to parents' familiarity with the case plan.

**Table 15**

<b>Parents are Familiar With Case Plan by Region, Number, and Percent</b>				
<b>Region</b>	<b>Yes Familiar</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>No Not Familiar</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Northern	9	90%	1	10%
Southcentral	20	95%	1	5%
Anchorage	50	94%	3	6%
Southeast	15	83%	3	17%
Total	94	92%	8	8%

- **Were you asked to give your ideas and suggestions when the case plan was developed?**

When the Office of Children's Services involves the parents in the development of their case plan, it provides an opportunity for the parents and caseworker to identify needs and services. The parent's involvement facilitates their commitment to addressing the safety concerns. Table 16 presents the parents' responses to whether the agency sought their involvement in case plan development.

**Table 16**

<b>Parents Asked for Input on Case Plan by Region, Number, and Percent</b>				
<b>Region</b>	<b>Yes Asked</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>No Not Asked</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Northern	7	70%	3	30%
Southcentral	9	43%	12	57%
Anchorage	30	57%	23	43%
Southeast	6	33%	12	67%
Total	52	51%	50	49%

- **Did you feel your input was considered when the case plan was written?**

Parents are encouraged to share their thoughts when developing their case plan. Many of the respondents commented that their thoughts and ideas were considered and that they were given service options to meet their needs. Other respondents commented that no one listened to what they had to say or took the time to explain the case plan process to them. Table 17 presents the parents' responses to whether they felt that their input was considered in the case planning process.

**Table 17**

<b>Parents' Input On Case Plan Was Considered by Region, Number, and Percent</b>				
<b>Region</b>	<b>Yes Considered</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>No-Not Considered</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Northern	6	60%	4	40%
Southcentral	8	38%	13	62%
Anchorage	28	53%	25	47%
Southeast	7	39%	11	61%
Total	49	48%	53	52%

- **Did you receive a copy of the case plan?**

When the case plan is completed, the caseworker provides the parents with a written copy. The case plan acts as a guide for parents in helping them track their progress in achieving the case plan goals and objectives. The majority of parents were provided a written copy of their case plan. Table 18 presents the responses to parents' receipt of their case plan.

**Table 18**

<b>Parents Received a Copy of Case Plan by Region, Number, and Percent</b>						
<b>Region</b>	<b>Yes- Received</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>No-Did Not Receive</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Unsure- If Received</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Northern	8	80%	2	20%	0	0%
Southcentral	19	91%	2	9%	0	0%
Anchorage	40	76%	8	15%	5	9%
Southeast	12	67%	6	33%	0	0%
Total	79	77%	18	18%	5	5%

- **What suggestions do you have for how we can improve the case plan development process for families?**

The case plan development process is an event in which parents are able to voice their strengths as well as their needs. Case planning occurs throughout the life of the case. Parents are invited to share their thoughts and discuss the services that will benefit them and their family. Many of the respondents commented that agency workers need to have improved listening skills. Some respondents remarked that receiving a pre-filled case plan and being told what to do was not helpful. The parents stated that the case plan should be individualized and targeted to their needs rather than offering general services.

- **What is the permanent plan for your children?**

Permanency goals for children are based on their long-term needs. Permanency goals include reunifying children with their parents, adoption or guardianship, and other planned living arrangements such as emancipation of the child. When respondents were asked about the permanency plan for their child, more than half indicated that the plan was for the child to return home. Table 19 presents parent's responses to their child's permanency goal.

**Table 19**

<b>Child's Permanent Goal by Region, Number, and Percent</b>						
<b>Region</b>	<b>Return Home</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Adoption or Guardianship</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Other or Unsure</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Northern	6	60%	1	10%	3	30%
Southcentral	13	62%	5	24%	3	14%
Anchorage	38	72%	13	24%	2	4%
Southeast	8	44%	5	28%	5	28%
Total	65	64%	24	23%	13	13%

- **Were services identified to help you and your family?**

The Office of Children's Services strives to ensure parents receive services that are targeted to their identified needs. It is important for the agency to involve families in discussing services they think would be helpful to them. Respondents were asked if the agency had worked with them to identify their services needs. More than half of the respondents commented that they were asked about what services they needed. Table 20 presents the responses.

**Table 20**

Services Identified For Family by Region, Number, and Percent				
Region	Yes-Services Identified	Percent	No-Services Not Identified	Percent
Northern	7	70%	3	30%
Southcentral	17	81%	4	19%
Anchorage	47	89%	6	11%
Southeast	17	94%	1	6%
Total	88	86%	14	14%

- **Did we offer support and assistance in accessing these services such as assisting with appointments, transportation, or bus tokens?**

The Office of Children's Services provides support and assistance to families in accessing services to address issues that caused them to become involved with the agency. The respondents commented that the agency had helped them by providing bus tokens, taxicab vouchers, and service referrals. Table 21 presents the parents' responses to whether the agency offered support with accessing services.

**Table 21**

Support and Assistance in Accessing Services by Region, Number, and Percent				
Region	Yes- Support Provided	Percent	No-Support Not Provided	Percent
Northern	6	60%	4	40%
Southcentral	15	71%	6	29%
Anchorage	37	70%	16	30%
Southeast	12	67%	6	33%
Total	70	69%	32	31%

- **Were there services that you would like to have received but were not able to? If so, please describe them and why you were not able to receive the services.**

There are instances when families need services that the agency does not provide. This may be due to unavailability of a particular service in the community or inability to fund the service. Several respondents commented that they needed services that were available in the community, but they did not receive them due to a wait list or a lack of a referral made to the service provider on their behalf. Table 22 presents responses.

**Table 22**

<b>Parents Would Like To Have Received Additional Services by Region, Number, and Percent</b>				
<b>Region</b>	<b>Yes-Needed Additional Services</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>No-Did Not Need Additional Services</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Northern	2	20%	8	80%
Southcentral	8	38%	13	62%
Anchorage	19	36%	34	64%
Southeast	7	39%	11	61%
Total	36	35%	66	65%

- **Have the services been helpful to you and your family? Why or Why not?**

The Office of Children's Services provides services to families that are intended to strengthen parents and help them make positive life changes. The majority of the respondents said services they received helped to turn their lives around. Several of the respondents remarked that the educational information on domestic violence was helpful. They indicated that parenting classes helped them adopt new approaches to parenting their children. Other respondents said counseling helped them identify the source of their anger and ways to manage it. Respondents also stated that the substance abuse treatment and aftercare services they received helped them accept responsibility for their behavior.

Other respondents commented that services had not helped them because the services they received were not what they needed. Some of the respondents were disappointed with the parenting classes they received because the parenting classes focused on budgeting and finance rather than parenting skills development. Several parents said they

had engaged in services to address issues and concerns identified by the agency, but the agency did not return the children to their care. Table 23 presents the responses to helpfulness of services.

**Table 23**

<b>Services Received Were Helpful by Region, Number, and Percent</b>				
<b>Region</b>	<b>Yes-Helpful</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>No- Not Helpful</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Northern	4	40%	6	60%
Southcentral	11	52%	10	48%
Anchorage	38	72%	15	28%
Southeast	13	72%	5	28%
Total	66	65%	36	35%

- **Do you understand the activities and changes that remain to be made in order to have your case closed?**

The agency reviews the case plan progress and activities with parents on an ongoing basis throughout the life of the case. This is done to ensure they understand what they need to do in order accomplish their case goals. The majority of the respondents were aware of the tasks and activities that they still needed to complete.

Several parents indicated they had completed their case goals. Other respondents remarked that they did not have a clear understanding of the tasks and activities that the Office of Children's Services wanted them to complete in order to have their children returned home and their case closed. Table 24 presents the responses.

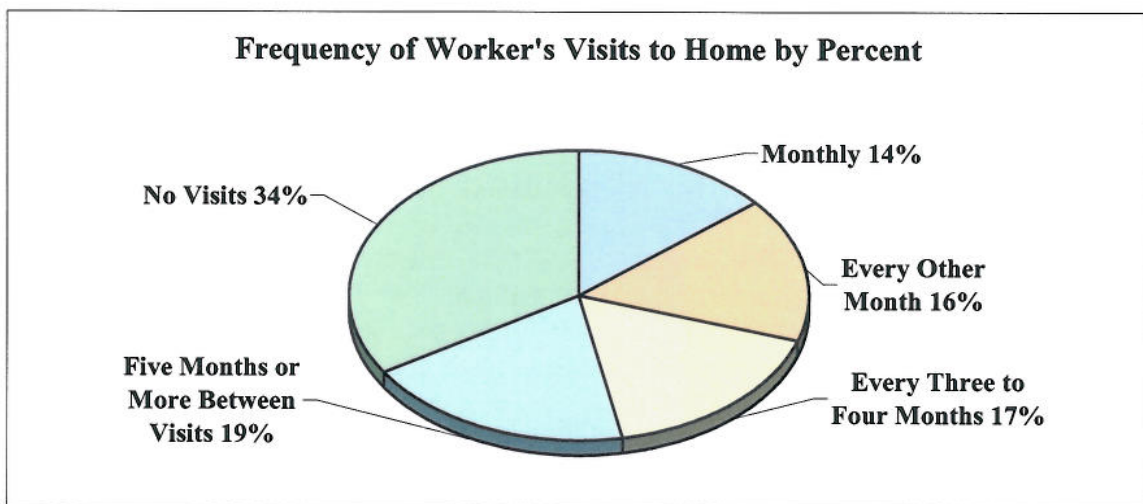
**Table 24**

<b>Parents Understand Activities and Changes Needed by Region, Number, and Percent</b>				
<b>Region</b>	<b>Yes- Understand</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>No-Do Not Understand</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Northern	9	90%	1	10%
Southcentral	15	71%	6	29%
Anchorage	43	81%	10	19%
Southeast	15	83%	3	17%
Total	82	80%	20	20%

- **How often does your worker visit in your home?**

Regular and consistent caseworker visits with parents in their home and at the office support the development of a working relationship between the caseworker and parent. Visits also allow the caseworker to assess and monitor parents' ongoing service needs. Respondents were asked to indicate how frequently the worker visited them in their home. They were also asked to indicate how often they visited with the worker in their office. Parents' report on frequency of worker visits is presented in figure 2 and figure 3.

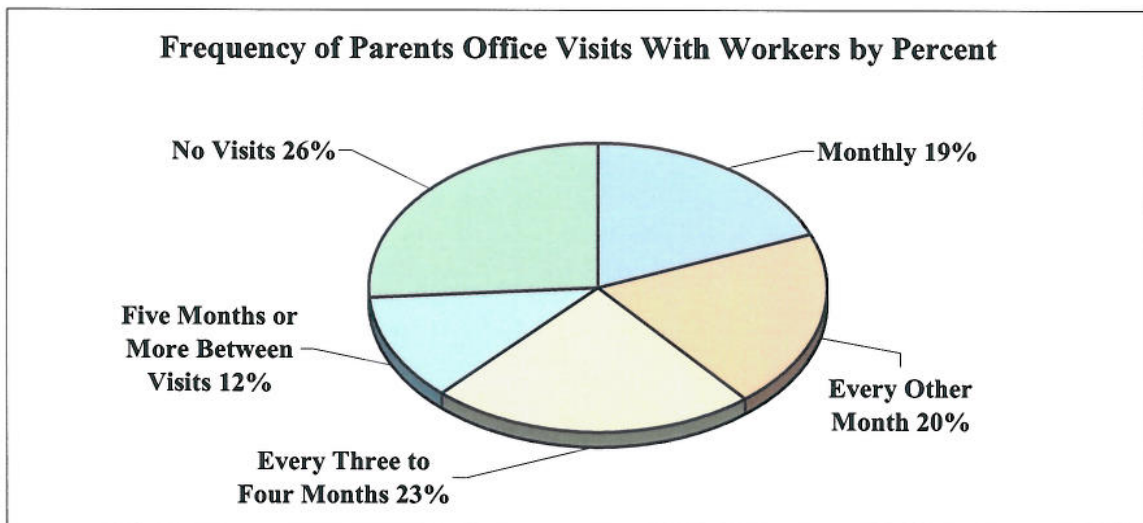
**Figure 2**



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- **How often do you visit with your worker in their office?**

**Figure 3**



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- **How helpful are the visits when they occur?**

Respondents were asked to comment on how helpful the worker visits are when they occur in the home or office. Respondents commented that workers' visits were not helpful because they were not consistent with their needs and that visits were not often enough. There were some comments that workers did not always show up as planned.

Several respondents indicated that when visits occurred the worker was supportive and they felt that the worker had their family's best interest in mind. Comments were received that the worker actively monitored the parent's progress in services throughout the case. Table 25 presents the responses to helpfulness of visits.

**Table 25**

Helpfulness of Home and Office Visits by Region, Number, and Percent						
Region	Very and Somewhat Helpful	Percent	Helpful	Percent	Not Very Helpful	Percent
Northern	2	22%	4	45%	3	33%
Southcentral	4	20%	6	30%	10	50%
Anchorage	11	26%	16	38%	15	36%
Southeast	2	13%	5	31%	9	56%
Total	19	22%	31	36%	37	42%

- **Do you and your caseworker discuss your case plan when you meet?**

Respondents indicated that when visits occurred, the case plan was discussed most of the time. Some of the respondents stated workers did not spend enough time discussing case issues during visits in the home or office. Table 26 presents parents' responses to discussion of the case plan during visits.

**Table 26**

Case Plan Discussed During Visits by Region, Number, and Percent				
Region	Yes-Discussed	Percent	No-Not Discussed	Percent
Northern	7	70%	3	30%
Southcentral	10	48%	11	52%
Anchorage	37	70%	16	30%
Southeast	8	44%	10	56%
Total	62	61%	40	39%

- **How timely is your worker in returning your calls and e-mails?**

When workers maintain communication with the families they serve, it enhances and strengthens their relationships with families. Parents must be able to reach their workers in order to problem solve and discuss their case plan. Respondents indicated their level of agreement with the timeliness of workers returning their calls and e-mails. Table 27 presents the responses.

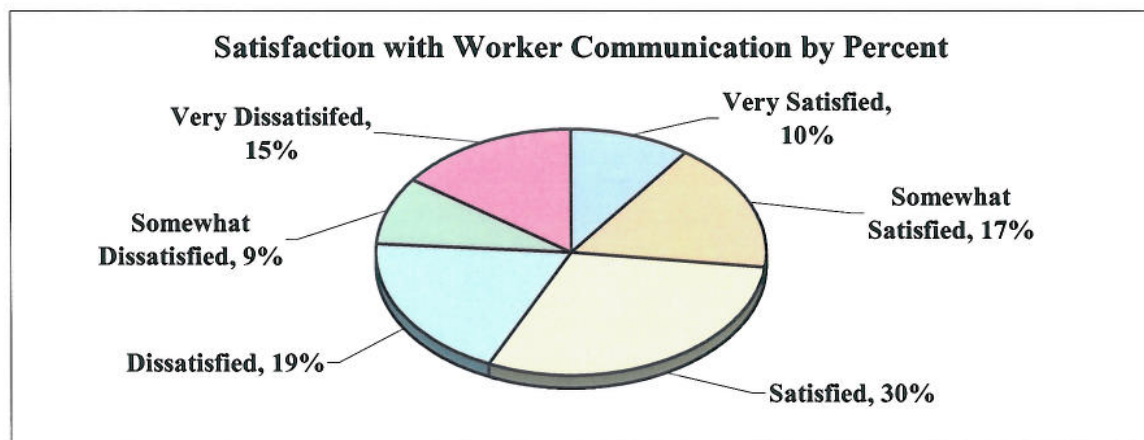
**Table 27**

<b>Timeliness of Returned Calls and E-Mails by Region, Number, and Percent</b>						
<b>Region</b>	<b>Very Timely</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Timely</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Not Timely</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Northern	1	10%	4	40%	5	50%
Southcentral	2	10%	7	33%	12	57%
Anchorage	10	19%	20	38%	23	43%
Southeast	2	11%	10	56%	6	33%
Total	15	15%	41	40%	46	45%

- **Overall, how satisfied are you with communication with your caseworker?**

It is important to parents to have workers maintain consistent and ongoing communication with them. Ongoing communication helps parents to know what progress is being made in their case and supports parents in achieving their case goals. Parents indicated their level of satisfaction with the communication with their worker. Figure 4 presents their responses.

**Figure 4**



n=102

- **How many workers have you had on your case?**

Parents often express frustration with the high turnover of workers. The agency is aware of how disruptive a change in worker can be to the family. The continuity of the case management is very important to achieving the family's permanency goal. Parents were asked how many workers they had over the life of their case. Table 28 presents the responses.

**Table 28**

Number of Workers Families Have Had By Region and Percent						
Region	One Worker	Percent	Two-Three Workers	Percent	Three or More Workers	Percent
Northern	1	10%	8	80%	1	10%
Southcentral	4	19%	13	62%	4	19%
Anchorage	10	19%	32	60%	11	21%
Southeast	2	11%	10	56%	6	33%
Total	17	17%	63	62%	22	21%

- **Were you notified that your worker was changing before the change occurred?**

When changes in caseworkers occur, the agency makes every effort to notify the parents. This is to ensure that case management is not disrupted. Respondents were asked to comment on their experience with worker notification. Most of the respondents stated they received notification of a worker change. Many of the respondents remarked that their worker introduced them to the new worker. Several respondents commented that they were not notified of a change in worker. Respondents who indicated they only had one worker are not included in the table below. Table 29 presents the responses to parent notification of caseworker change.

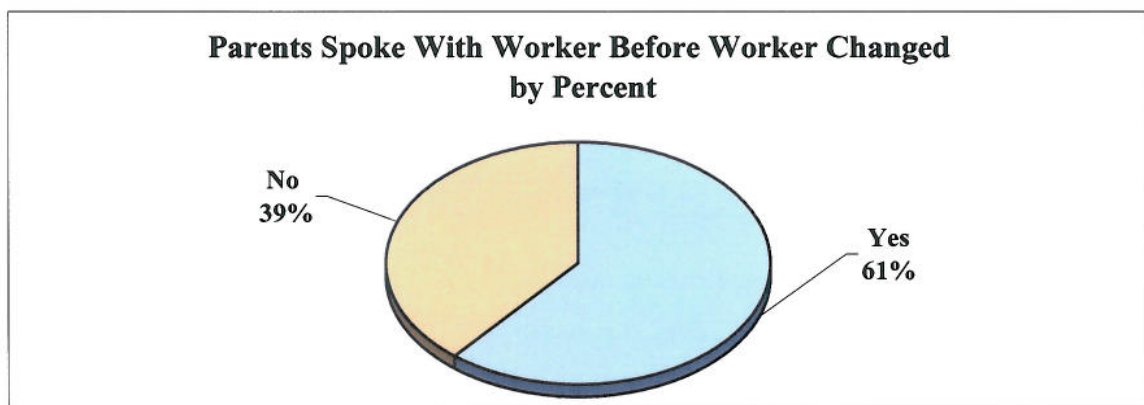
**Table 29**

Parents Received Notification of Worker Reassignment by Region, Number, and Percent				
Region	Yes-Notified	Percent	No-Not Notified	Percent
Northern	8	89%	1	11%
Southcentral	9	53%	8	47%
Anchorage	26	61%	17	39%
Southeast	9	56%	7	44%
Total	52	61%	33	39%

- **Were you able to talk with your worker before they were transferred from your case?**

It is helpful if parents are able to speak with the worker who is leaving the case. This allows for the progress of the case to be reviewed and issues for the new worker to be identified. Respondents were asked if they were able to speak with their worker before the worker left the case. Figure 5 presents the responses.

**Figure 5**

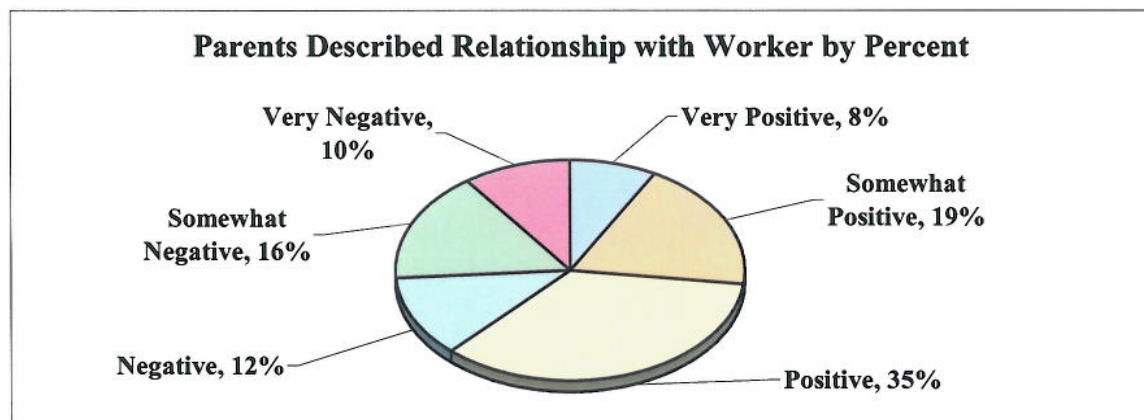


n=85

- **How would you describe your overall working relationship with your worker?**

A supportive and helpful relationship between the worker and family is important. The positive relationship helps encourage parents to make needed changes. Respondents were asked to describe their relationship with their worker. Figure 6 presents the responses.

**Figure 6**



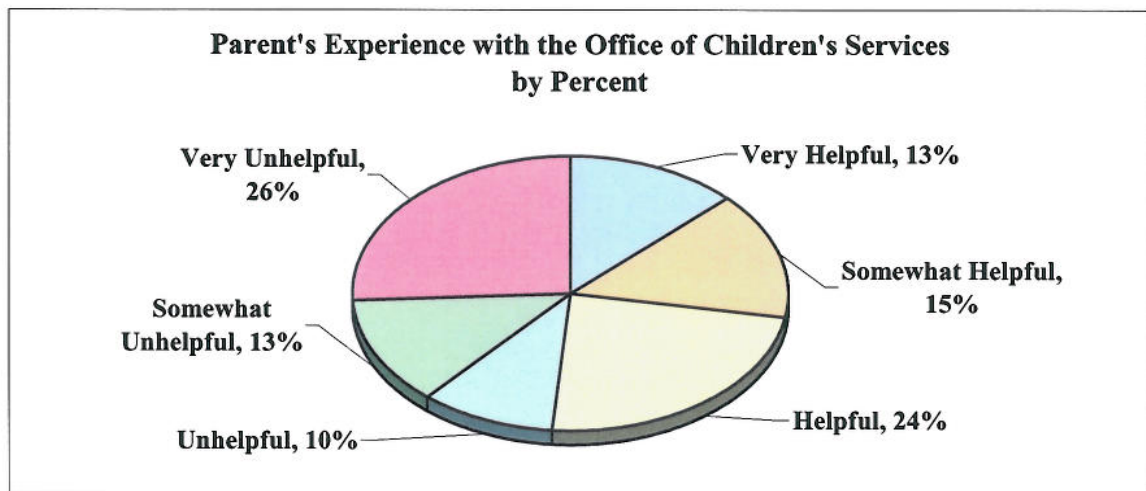
n=102

- **How would you describe your overall experience with the Office of Children's Services?**

Parents were asked about their overall experience with the Office of Children's Services. Parents were encouraged to add comments they felt would be helpful to the agency in improving our work with families. Several respondents stated the agency helped them access services that were helpful in reuniting them with their children. They indicated that they felt supported by their caseworker and treated with respect. They noted the services helped them make significant life changes. Parents also noted assistance with food and transportation. Several respondents stated that the workers were professional in their interactions.

Other respondents shared areas in which they had concerns. There were concerns that workers sometimes appeared judgmental. Having more than one caseworker was experienced as a difficulty for families. There were some concerns that service coordination to assist the families was inconsistent. Parents stressed the need for regular communication with caseworkers. Figure 7 shows parents response to their experience with the Office of Children's Services.

**Figure 7**



n=102

- **What are some things that we can do to improve our working relationship with families and to improve our services to families?**

Parents shared comments on how the agency can improve their working relationship with families. Their comments focused on several areas for improvement which included a need for increased communication and enhanced listening skills, the need for increased worker visits to the home, increased awareness of culture, and more timely reunifications.

The respondents identified the need for increased connections between the families and the agency. The importance of workers returning phone calls was stressed. Facilitating access to services and ongoing support was cited as a need. Families stressed the importance that the caseworkers keep them informed and that caseworkers are supportive in helping them access services. The majority of the respondents described the importance of strong working relationships between the agency and families.

Many of the parents addressed the need that they be kept informed on the progress of their case. The importance of workers communicating clearly, making regular phone calls, and home visits to the families was stressed. Families wanted to be fully informed about the availability of services. One parent indicated it would be helpful if the caseworkers met with parents individually for a substantial period of time to discuss their case. It was recommended a “parent advocate” be provided, similar to the Guardian ad Litem role for children. Other parents noted a need for the agency to work more quickly to achieve reunification.

Some parents reported a positive experience with the agency and spoke of the enormous challenges the agency faces. One parent stated that their experience was positive, but they were aware of other parents whose experiences were not so positive. This parent offered the suggestion that workers should listen without judging and this would help to strengthen their relationship with families.

### **Additional Comments**

Parents were asked at the conclusion of the conversation if there was anything else they wanted to share with the Office of Children’s Services. Approximately half of the parents who participated in the telephone survey provided comments. Parents indicated a need for more support and improved communication from the agency. Several of the respondents reiterated a concern that worker caseloads are too high. Some parents indicated that worker turnover impacts services to families and achievement in meeting case plan goals. Many respondents continued to be concerned about the lack of visits and ongoing communication with their caseworker.

There were several parents who commented that their experiences were positive. Parents credited the caseworker in helping them achieve their case goals. One parent stated that the agency helped them make a difficult decision regarding a permanent placement for their children out of their home. Another parent stated that the caseworker was instrumental in advocating for successful services, which had a positive outcome on their case.

Several parents emphasized the importance that the management of the Office of Children's Services use the information from the survey and implement their suggestions into changes in work with families. Many of them would like to see their participation in the survey result in the agency having improved communication with parents.

### **Appreciation to Respondents**

The Department of Health and Social Services, Office of Children's Services, are grateful to all parents who participated in the telephone survey. Staff and management will incorporate the information gained through this survey in our efforts to assist families and children.